

X/13 CS -- MORNING INTRO: WEST BERLINERS DEMONSTRATE FOR CSSR AT CITY HALL

BERLIN, AUG 22 (RFE SPECIAL/SCHLEICH) -- MANY THOUSAND WEST BERLINERS LAST NIGHT GATHERED AT CITY HALL TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR SOLIDARITY WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND TO PROTEST AGAINST THE WARSAW PACT MILITARY INVASION OF THE COUNTRY.

ABOUT 10,000 PEOPLE, HEADED BY GOVERNING MAYOR KLAUS SCHUETZ AND SEVERAL OTHER PROMINENT CITY, PARTY AND TRADE UNION LEADERS, HAD MARCHED IN SILENCE ALONG A TWO-AND-A-HALF-KILOMETER ROUTE FROM THE CITY CENTER WITTENBERGPLATZ TO JOHN F. KENNEDY PLATZ IN FRONT OF CITY HALL.

THEY WERE CARRYING A CZECHOSLOVAK NATIONAL FLAG AND NUMEROUS POSTERS CALLING FOR FREEDOM FOR CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND CONDEMNING THE SOVIET UNION WITH SLOGANS SUCH AS "FREEDOM FOR THE CSSR," "SOVIET ARGUMENT: TANKS" AND "HITLER TODAY RULES IN MOSCOW AND PANKOW" (EAST BERLIN GOVERNMENT DISTRICT).

ON THEIR WAY, THE DEMONSTRATORS LIT HUNDREDS OF TORCHES. AS THEY ARRIVED AT CITY HALL, A CROWD WHICH HAD ALREADY GATHERED THERE BROKE INTO RHYTHMIC SHOUTS OF "DUBCEK...SVOBODA, DUBCEK...SVOBODA."

GOVERNING MAYOR SCHUETZ, WHO ADDRESSED THE CROWD FROM THE CITY HALL STEPS, EXPRESSED SYMPATHY WITH THE LIBERALIZATION PROCESS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA BUT NOTED THAT THE DEVELOPMENTS IN RECENT MONTHS HAD BEEN WATCHED WITH DOUBTS AND CONCERN.

"WE WERE SKEPTICAL," SCHUETZ SAID, "BECAUSE WE KNOW THE SOVIETS AND WE KNOW THE STALINISTS IN EAST BERLIN."

SCHUETZ SAID IT WAS FOR GOOD REASON THAT WEST GERMAN AND WEST BERLIN POLITICAL LEADERS HAD SHOWN RESERVE IN RECENT MONTHS IN THEIR STATEMENTS ON MATTERS CONCERNING CZECHOSLOVAKIA "SO THAT NOBODY MIGHT USE IT AS AN EXCUSE FOR ANY ACTIONS AGAINST CZECHOSLOVAKIA."

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